Sedona, AZ

The unhappy divorce from Kay Mahoney Vallejos apparently included the loss of the house on 889 First Street in Yuma. Bob said he could sleep on a pile of rocks, and I didn't doubt he could (and had!). He still had the "Lapidary Arts & Crafts" shop and his truck. He just had to try and shake off this family curse.

Still able to get by from money he saved from the Mexican survey work; Bob decided to take a summer college course offered in Florida.

"I told (the rock shop landlord) I'll pay for my rent in advance. (But when) I came back (from Florida), there was no sign of "Lapidary Arts and Crafts". It had a little bicycle shop in there…I went next door an says, 'What the hell is going on here!?'

The owner panicked and flustered to see his renter alive, well and very mad; offered an all too familiar explanation.

"Oh…we got a letter…this guy Frank said you'd been in some kind of accident or something and you were dead!"

After talking to the author of the letter, the owner was satisfied Frank was indeed Robert's father. The owner asked,

"OK, what is it you want to do? (To which Frank) replied, 'I'd like to take what he's got in there…its family property.' "

Frank's grudge against his son was never ending. Looking to make a fast buck, Frank was unaware of the value of the rough rock (turquoise) Bob had stashed in the shop and basically gave it away.

"…and all my equipment, everything was gone. I got pissed. (I found out) dad had sold a bunch of (my) equipment to a certain guy. That turquoise he sold; over 400 lbs.; he sold for $100 bucks…it was worth (at least) $11,000."

Bob was able to sue for the return of his equipment but could not recover the more valuable rough rock.

"I had nowhere else to go…where am I gonna live now?"

Bob needed to calm down: the stress and rage were becoming all consuming. His health was precarious at best. His heart and spirit were tight, heavy, without direction or solace.
No matter where Bob looked the rocks had a gray, lifeless cast.

His truck was home for the time being. He went to the grocery store to buy some non-perishable food items. While waiting in the check-out line, Bob mindlessly poked at some picture post cards. Immense red sandstone formations of Sedona caught his eye. The lure of the great rocks tugged at his tattered soul. *'There… there I could find some peace!'*

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In October 1977, Bob secured a sales contract on a home at 80 Disney Lane in Sedona, for $67K. He put $8K down in cash. The mortgage was $600 a month. It was a beautiful, ranch style home, only 4 years old. It had large picture windows on the North side, and more important, a huge 4 car garage. Bob no longer planned to open a rock shop storefront. He intended to keep all his assets under one roof.

With the equipment he managed to recover in Yuma, Bob hired 7 local women and trained them to cut, smooth and polish cabochons for jewelry. The large garage was perfect for a workshop. By the end of 1977, Bob had a very lucrative business up and running.

"There was a lot of rock shops (in Sedona) at that time. The locals were makin big money selling crap to the movie stars…but I had quality."

For a moment in time, Bob was happy. He brought Sam to live with him in Sedona. He had just turned 12 and was signed up to attend yet another school. By this time all of Bob's kids, except Sam, had aged out of the welfare system. Several kids went to stay with their grandpa until they found directions for their lives. As their father, Bob still felt responsible for helping his kids when they needed it. Of Bob's 5 sons, it was Mike (not his real name), who had the biggest chip on his shoulder when it came to his father. Brothers and sisters remembered Mike's hot temper. Especially the day he set fire to a rabbit hutch, which killed the rabbits and spread flames to a neighbor's vacant lot.

Mike's arrogance of the law landed him in juvenile hall, after he broke into a sporting goods store. Once he was out, he chose friends of poor character and continued to pursue, 'the easy life.' Mike was 20 years old when he learned his dad was living in Sedona.

Always willing to help his kids, Bob allowed Mike…

"…and whoever the hell he was hangin around with (to move in with me and Sam). (They) damn near burned (the house) down. Cause I wouldn't give him my car or truck and (so much money) an hour (working lapidary) for talent he never had…"

Bob was busy filling jewelry orders with the hired help. Mike, however, was busy bothering the women he employed, and ruined more than one rock saw with his impatience.

When Bob became very ill with the (flu), his high temperature prompted him to soak in the bathtub with ice. Mike picks this moment to go after his dad with a baseball bat. The argument was about money, and the loss of a large jewelry order Mike was to mail for him. Bob disarmed Mike and almost sent him through one of the big picture windows.

Still sick and hurting, a few mornings later…

"About 4:30 in the morning, BAM! BAM! BAM! 'POLICE!' It was the FBI."

Not only was the FBI pissed about the defacing of an American flag; that hung upside down on an outside wall, with 'AIM' (American Indian Movement) slogans on it; they got mad when…

"(Mike) went (into Bob's bank) and started screaming at everybody that I owed him (a lot of money) in back wages, (waving sticks of) dynamite around in the bank. 'I'll blow this god damn place if I don't get that damn money!' The FBI picked <u>me</u> up."

Yes, it was Bob's dynamite.

"I had dynamite illegally…I had 4 sticks I had borrowed from a friend (for mining). I wasn't going to go all the way to damn Phoenix to get a case of dynamite. So, I borrowed until I was ready to buy a case."

Unfortunately, that little stunt eventually got Bob banned from working any mine claims in Arizona.

Still reeling from the brush with the law, he and Sam took off to take a load of petrified wood to a client. When he got home, he found the house in shambles and the women workers gone. The neighbor had called the police during all the commotion, but when they arrived – no Mike.

Two days later Mike reappears, claiming ignorance of the 'break-in'.

Mike's anger was not satisfied, and he began to sabotage Bob's car and truck.

"Another trick (Mike) had pulled (was to) shove DVD magnetic tape into the gas tank (which) got broke up by the gasoline and plugged the carburetor. When that didn't work, he poured about 5 lbs. of sugar into the gas tank."

Frustration elevated to attempted murder, when Mike wired one of those sticks of dynamite to his dad's truck.

"He put …dynamite in my gas tank…and tried to wire it (so) the minute I turned the (ignition) key – KABOOM! Electric charge, that's all it (takes). He had a fuse in it and everything…however the wires had been grounded and didn't ignite."

"They didn't know jack shit about (dynamite). That's why I never got blowed up, because they didn't know how to work it; how to use it. I can take any type of dynamite and sit there with an ax and chop the hell outta it…and watch everybody scatter! Ha ha ha… I knew how to use dynamite."

"I'll never blame my kids for what they do to me. It's rough, but I know why. They only (understand) what their grandpa's said (about me). (Several have said) 'I hate you! Because you killed my momma!' "

Bob still had an angry client to appease. Once he was able to remake the jewelry order and mail it off, he and Sam hit the road.

"And why did I have (Sam) with me? I was running all over the country, because the welfare had an 'all-points bulletin' out on me. They were afraid I was going to take (Sam) to bed and do nasties with him."

Bob had no intention of getting more involved with the FBI, due to Mike's shenanigans. So, he took what jewelry he had left to sell, loaded up his truck with 12 yr old Sam and headed North. However, the truck fails them in New Meadows, 100 miles north of Boise, Idaho. Seems the carburetor and fuel line are clogged shut. (Mike's farewell salute to his dad 'abandoning him' – again.)

Bob and Sam find themselves in a bind. A local businessman offered the stranded boys a room in his run down, overgrown, 'hotel', built in the 1800's. The family lived off royalties from their father's invention of the cathoray tube used in early TV's.

"It was a beautiful place to fix the way it was supposed to be, instead of havin water run all in the rooms…cause they preferred to drink their money than to fix the place up. The reason they didn't have to work is because…that family line were the inventors of the…boob tube you have on television, on the older types of television sets. The cathoray tube is what (their father – Farnsworth) invented. So, they got a lot of money and a lot of royalties. Anyway, he says, 'Yeah, what you ought to do is go into like a partnership…I'll buy the silver, and you make the jewelry.' That wasn't his intent."

A demoralized Bob worked out a deal to trade jewelry for room, board and tools to work on his truck. The accommodation was horrendous: no running water, and toilet backed up. They were detained. Not allowed to leave to shop for groceries or go for parts needed to repair the truck.

For two months this uneasy stalemate kept Bob just out of sight of the police. Their hotel host sold off all the jewelry Bob made. But was loath to let this 'Indian cash cow' leave - wanting him to create more jewelry to sell. Bob was eventually able to patch together his truck, with a few engine 'modifications.'

Bob hollered to his shotgun toting host, he needed to go to the store, for medicine to help him breathe. Needing more beer anyway, his host went along to keep an eye on Bob.

"Of course I had (Sam) with me, he was just a kid…you don't leave them home alone."

Once they made it to the store…

"I opened up and cold cocked him…I dumped him right there by the store and hauled ass!"

Bob lost the peaceful, beautiful Sedona home due to non-payment….

"Guess where we wound up…Washington State."